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SUICIDE SQUAD
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SUICIDE SQUAD:
THE DRAGON'S HOARD
ISHERWOOD
KESEL

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G-6243

(BACK OF THE HEAD. THEN WE ARE OFF.)
CRAY!
WHAT?!
I WAS JUST GETTING A SANDWICH!
AMANDA'S BEEN BUSHWHACKED! I HEARD SHOTS AND NOW I CAN'T RAISE HER!
SHE OPENED THE CHANNEL JUST BEFORE THE SHOTS! IF YOU CAN TRAVEL VIA RADIO WAVES LIKE RAY PALMER USED TO...!
2

HOLY HELL!
KRAK!
ATOM! WHAT IS IT?! WHAT'S HAPPENED?!
BLAM!
<WHO IS THIS?!>
<WHAT DOES IT MATTER? KILL HIM!>
ATOM?! TALK TO ME!

BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM
48
<WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S THE BODY?>
<WE ONLY KILLED JOHJI! WHERE'S THE GAIJIN?!>
<DID HE TURN INVISIBLE?!>
<WHO IS THIS GUY?!>
<TETSUO! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?>
KRAK!
4

<KOSHI! WHERE IS THIS GUY?!>
<WHO CARES?! FINISH THE WOMAN AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!>

BLAM!

<NO, YOU FOOLS!>
ARGKKKK!
BLAM!
BLAM!

<FLEE!>
<WHAT ABOUT THE GAIJIN?>
<SHE'S DONE FOR! FLEE!>
ORACLE! GET ME SOME MEDICS-- FAST!
WALLER'S DOWN AND IT LOOKS BAD AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL TO DO NEXT!

FACT IS--SUDDENLY I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD MYSELF! IN FACT, I FEEL LIKE--
CRAY? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! CRAY?!
WHUMP!
AT THE SAME TIME, ON THE SHINJUKU, TOKYO'S CLUB DISTRICT...
HERE NOW. YOU OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK THAT, SPROUT?
NUKE YOURSELF.
I HATE THIS STUPID COUNTRY. I HATE THEIR BEER. I HATE THEIR WOMEN. I HATE THIS JOB AND EVERYONE ON IT.
OI! DROP OFF! YA KNOW WHAT YER WHOLE PROBLEM IS, SPORT? YER GOT AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM.

:BLERRRCH!:
YEAH, RIGHT. SAYS ONE OF THE PRIME DORKS OF THE WESTERN WORLD. "CAPTAIN BOOMERANG"! WHOA! THERE'S A NAME TO STRIKE TERROR WITH!
OH, TURN IT UP, MATE! WHAT'S YER MONIKER? "THE THINKER." LIKE THE REST OF YOUR GENERATION --CAN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING NEW. GOT TO RECYCLE EVERYTHING!

YOU KNOW, I REALLY HOPE YOU'RE IN RANGE WHEN I GET TO USE MY "PERSUASION FIELD."
I'LL HAVE YOU UP ON THE TABLES, DANCING NAKED, DOING REAL STRANGE THINGS WITH YOUR BODY PARTS.

I'VE DONE THAT BEFORE ON MY OWN.
MUCK WITH ME ONCE, PEANUT, AND I'LL UP AND JOB YA. DEAD CERT YER A DEAD MAN. AND THAT'S NOT THE PIGGS ARSE.

I GUESS I'D BE MORE SCARED IF I KNEW WHAT THE HELL YOU JUST SAID.
CHOOM OFF. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE WORKING THIS JOB SEPARATE, REMEMBER?

PLIZ. YOUR NAME IS BEING TIDEWATER?

TOO RIGHT, BILLY TIDEWATER FROM THE LAND DOWN UNDER. ER, AND YOU BLOKES ARE--?
YOU ARE NOT BILLY TIDEWATER. WE KNOW BILLY TIDEWATER.

OH, YOU KNOW MY COUSIN BILLY. BIT OF A FAMILY LAUGH, THAT.
Y'SEE, MY FATHER AND HIS FATHER WERE BROTHERS AND, SINCE ME AND OL' BILLY WERE BORN ABOUT THE SAME TIME, THEY THOUGHT IT'D BE A CHUCKLE TO GIVE US THE SAME NAME, SEE?

FUNNY, EH?
CARMICHAEL, YOU BUGGER!

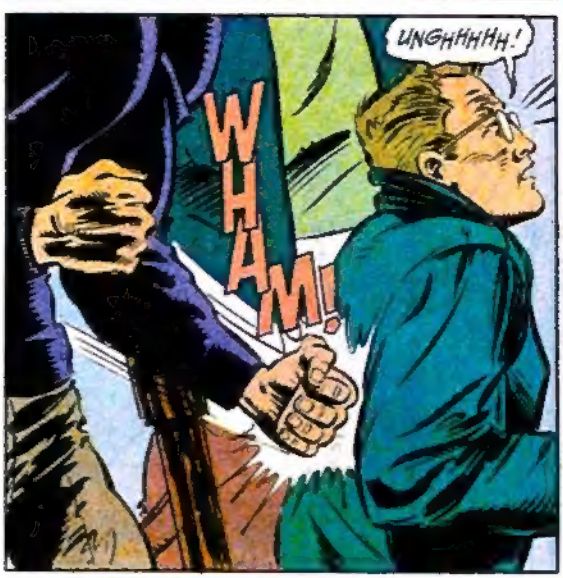
I AND THE OTHERS-- WE ARE DEAD MEN. THE BILLY TIDEWATER WE SEEK BETRAYED US TO THE KHYMER ROUGE. HE STOLE FROM US. WE WILL FIND HIM. YOU WILL TELL US WHERE TO FIND HIM--OR YOU ARE ALSO A DEAD MAN.
YOU UNDERSTAND?

TOO RIGHT! THE BUGGER'S STOLEN FROM ME AS WELL--KITH AND KIN AS I MAY BE! TELL YOU WHAT--WE'LL JOIN FORCES, YOU AND I! MATES, EH?
TO SHOW MY GOOD FAITH, I'LL LET YER IN ON SOMETHING FOR FREE.

SEE THAT LAD OVER THERE? THE ONE WITH THE SNEER AND THE LACK OF FASHION SENSE? HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE THE GO-BETWEEN FOR ME AND MY COUSIN, THE OTHER BILLY.
BRING HIM IN, GIVE HIS ARM A TWIST, HE'LL SING A SONG! THAT'S THE FAIR DINKUM, MATE.
THE FAIR DINKUM. <KOLOV, TRAFMIR--FETCH THE BOY. WE'LL QUESTION THEM BOTH AT OUR LODGINGS.>

HUL-LOOOO, AAAAMY. GOT A CONTACT, BABE. TWO UGLIES HEADING TOWARDS ME SO HOW ABOUT RELEASING MY HEAD SO I CAN SIC A LI'L MENTAL INFLUENCE ON 'EM?
WHAT SAY, AAAAAAMY?

HELLO, HELLO. CARMICHAEL TO BASE. WHERE ARE YOU, YOU STUPID COW?!
PLIZ. YOU TO COME WIZ US.


UNGHHHHH!
WHAM!

COME. WE TALK WITH BOY. WE TALK WITH YOU. WE TALK ABOUT YOUR "COUSIN." WE HAVE NICE LONG CHAT. COME.
WELL, THAT DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED! BLOODY HELL!

AT THE SAME TIME, AT THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN TOKYO--

ZAGTROW! IT LOOKS LIKE AMANDA'S RIGHT--THE RED SHADOWS ARE HERE IN TOKYO, BUT WHICH ONES?

IF THIS IS WHERE HIS COMMAND CENTER IS, MAYBE I CAN FIND OUT A FEW THINGS HERE!

LET'S SEE HOW WELL MY CRAM COURSE IN RUSSIAN SERVES ME.

HMH. THE RED SHADOWS HAVE ALL NEW PERSONNEL--A VAMPIRE WITH THE METAGENE NAMED SCHREK--BRR!--SOMEONE CODENAMED YEROSHA--ANOTHER CODENAMED LAMIA--THAT'S GREEK, IF I REMEMBER--AND...MRS. GRADENKO?!

FASSH!

I ASKED MYSELF -- WHO WOULD AMANDA WALLER SEND TO DETERMINE IF WE ALSO WERE INVESTIGATING THESE STOLEN SOVIET GUNS.

YOU WERE THE OBVIOUS CHOICE. SO WE BAIT OUR TRAP AND YOU WANDER IN.

THE LIGHTS WE ARRANGE THEM SO THERE ARE NO SHADOWS IN THE ROOM. NOTHING FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH.

YOU GOT ME. BUT SINCE WE'RE BOTH PRESUMABLY WORKING FOR THE SAME GOAL -- NEUTRALIZING THESE STOLEN WEAPONS -- WHY NOT WORK TOGETHER?

NYET. THIS IS SOVIET BUSINESS. IS ALSO PERSONAL BUSINESS. WE WILL DEAL WITH IT.

SORRY, COMRADE.

WE'VE ALREADY CASHED THE CHECK.

NOW -- GET OUT OF OUR WAY OR WE'LL GO THROUGH YOU!

MRS. GRADENKO ASSUME THE FORM, IF YOU PLEASE.
SNAP!
LORD OF HEAVEN!
GRROWLL!!
GRAHHR!

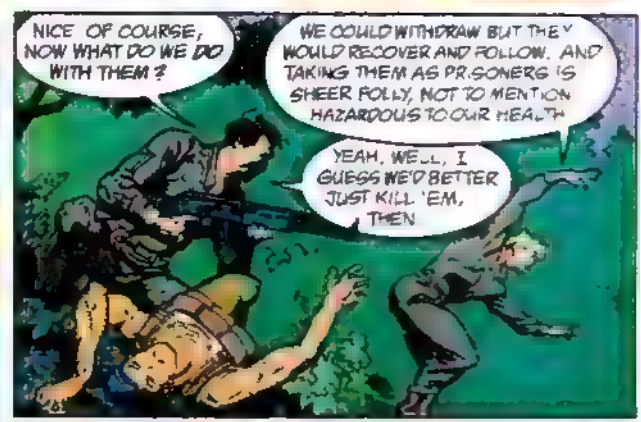
RICK?!
KRAK!
<THAT WAS GOOD, YEROSHA THE CHOICE OF RICK FLAG WAS A GOOD ONE>
<WHY THANK YOU COMRADE WHAT DO WE DO N TH HER NOW? THOSE SHADOWS SEEM QUITE UNFRIENDLY>
15

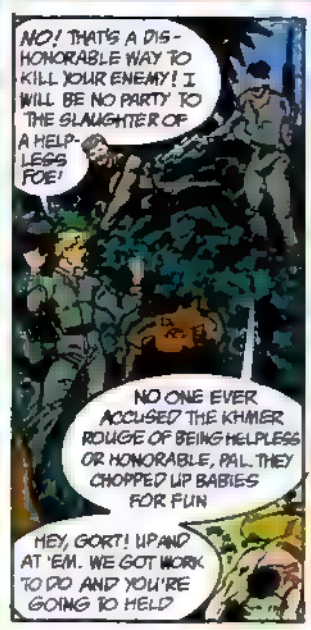
<THE PLAN WAS TO TRANSFORM NIGHTSHADE INTO A DOUBLE AGENT. THAT STILL HOLDS.>
<SCHREEK!>
<THERE. SHE IS THE ONE REMEMBER-- AS WE DISCUSSED. A TASTE ONLY. JUST ENOUGH TO BRING HER UNDER YOUR CONTROL.>
<I KNOW WHAT WE DISCUSSED. BUT THE HUNGER-- IT BURNS!>
<YOU WILL BE FED LATER. FOR NOW-- THIS WILL DO TO ABATE YOUR NEEDS AS WE DISCUSSED!>
<YES. AS WE... DISCUSSED AS YOU... WISH.>
14

AT THE SAME TIME IN THE JUNGLES OF CAMBODIA...
A FINE PAIR OF FOOLS! YOU MIGHT HAVE BOTH BEEN NEEDLESSLY KILLED!
NAH. GORT WOULD'VE SURVIVED THE JUMP WITH OR WITHOUT THE CHUTE. OF COURSE, I WOULD'VE KILLED HIM IF HE DIDN'T TAKE THE CHUTE.
WHERE'S THE GEAR?
DO I LOOK LIKE YOUR LACKEY, LAWTON? I TOSSED IT OUT OF THE PLANE. I PRESUME GRAVITY IS STILL WORKING AND IT LANDED IN THE JUNGLE NEARBY.
WE'D BETTER FIND IT. THE TRANSCEIVERS ARE IN THERE. THE WALL CAN'T TELL US WHERE THE GUNS ARE AND WE CAN'T CALL OUR TAXI WITHOUT 'EM.
BY THE WAY, THE LASER PISTOL BROKE IN THE JUMP. DON'T TELL GORT.
KHMER ROUGE! HANDS UP HANDS UP HANDS UP!

WELCOME, COMRADES. PLEASE TO FIRE AWAY

I GO--YOU GO GUARANTEED, GORT.
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF.

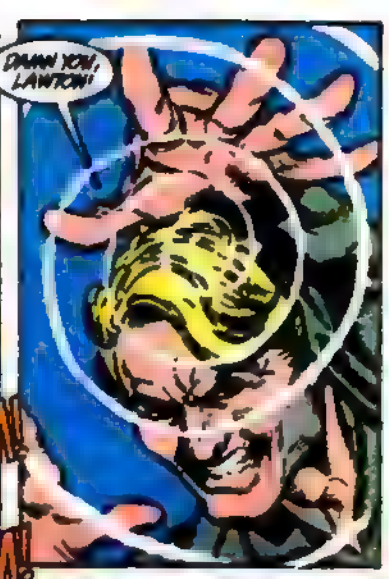

NICE OF COURSE, NOW WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?
WE COULD WITHDRAW BUT THEY WOULD RECOVER AND FOLLOW. AND TAKING THEM AS PRISONERS IS SHEER FOLLY, NOT TO MENTION HAZARDOUS TO OUR HEALTH
YEAH, WELL, I GUESS WE'D BETTER JUST KILL 'EM, THEN


NO! THAT'S A DISHONORABLE WAY TO KILL YOUR ENEMY! I WILL BE NO PARTY TO THE SLAUGHTER OF A HELPLESS FOE!
NO ONE EVER ACCUSED THE KHMER ROUGE OF BEING HELPLESS OR HONORABLE, PAL. THEY CHOPPED UP BABIES FOR FUN
HEY, GORT! LIP AND AT 'EM. WE GOT WORK TO DO AND YOU'RE GOING TO HELP

FORGIVE ME, LITTLE COMRADES--BUT IT IS NECESSARY THAT YOU DIE

SNAP!

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!

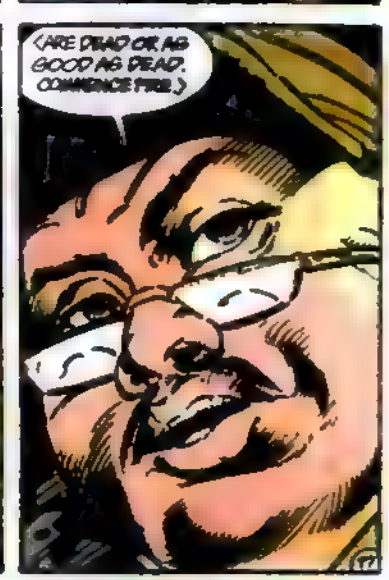

DAMN YOU, LAWTON!

KRAK!

KDOW
KDOW

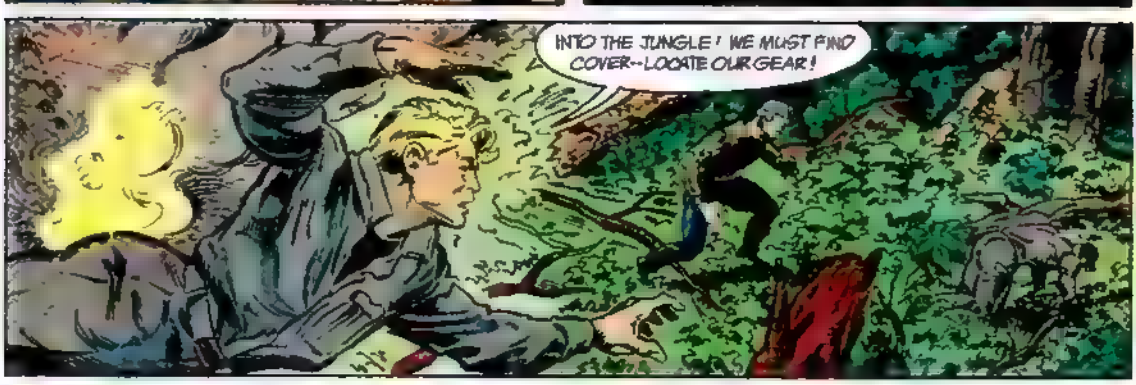
KDOW!

(TELL THE MORTAR SQUADS TO BEGIN FIRING ON THE CLEARING.)
(BUT, COMRADE COMMANDER--OUR OWN PEOPLE--!)


(ARE DEAD OR AS GOOD AS DEAD. COMMENCE FIRE.)

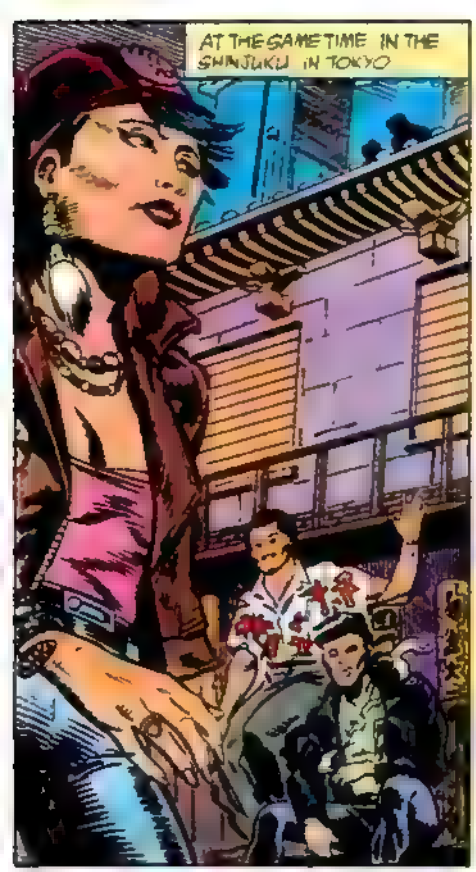
UH OH. INCOMING

WHADAM!


INTO THE JUNGLE! WE MUST FIND COVER--LOCATE OUR GEAR!

FOR YOUR SAKE, NEVER LET ME FIND YOU WITHOUT THAT GUN

"<ORDERS, COMRADE COMMANDER?>
"<PURSUE THEM UNTIL THEY DROP. KILL THEM IF THEY RESIST, BRING THEM TO ME IF THEY SURRENDER. THEY ARE HERE FOR THE DRAGON'S HOARD--AND THEY WILL TELL ME ALL THEY KNOW OF IT.>"


AT THE SAME TIME IN THE SHINJUKU IN TOKYO

YOU SURE THIS IS THE YAKUZA CLAN HQ? DON'T LOOK LIKE MUCH
APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING--

THE DAICHI DOKU HAVE FALLEN A BIT SINCE MY LAST INVOLVEMENT WITH THEM. THE OLDER OYABUNS DON'T APPROVE OF THIS GUN RUNNING, BUT RYU IS A MODERN YAKUZA LORD, DETERMINED TO GET AHEAD WHATEVER WAY HE CAN.
THIS CATSEYE CHARACTER YOU ENCOUNTERED ... A META-POWERED MARTIAL ARTIST?
YEAH--MAYBE BIO-ENGINEERED TO BOOT. REFLEXES FASTER THAN NORMAL, CLAWS IN HIS FINGERS AND TOES. MOOK WENT FROM A STANDING START TO A TWENTY-FOOT LEAP STRAIGHT UP IN THE AIR--AND HIS EYES ARE REAL WEIRD

LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING HIM.

GETTING IN WAS AWFULLY EASY DO YOU THINK--?

--THIS IS A TRAP? OH, YOU'RE NOT WRONG.
BUT THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT THE DAICHI DOKU KNOWS IS TO WALK INTO IT AND HOPE WE CAN WORK OUR WAY BACK OUT.
SOME PLAN! EVEN AMANDA GIVES ME BETTER THAN THAT!

SCHEKK
YAHRG!

SCHEKK

SNETT
FAPT!
POISON?
KRAK!

NEXT: "DRAGON'S TEETH"

# SUICIDE NOTES

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### *SPECIAL LETTER AWARENESS ACHIEVEMENT BOX*

Dear Mysterious Dan Raspler,

I take you up on your challenge at the end of issue #51 of the SUICIDE SQUAD: I will attempt to name all of the undead guest stars who appeared in issue #50.

Mindboggler (died in Qurac, issue #2)
The first Jaculi (died in Qurac, issue #2)
Manticore (died in Qurac, issue #2, and Manhattan, issue #18)
Psi, the Original Thinker, and Weasel (died in Nicaragua in THE DOOM PATROL & SUICIDE SQUAD SPECIAL, #1)
Shrike (died in Ogaden, issue #25)
Ravan (died in Israel, issue #47)

All these characters died outside the U.S., so it was easy for Keachei (or Jeff Bright) to get hold of their bodies. Did I miss anybody?

As for issue #51, it was interesting. It's nice to see both Nightshade and The Enchantress again. Also Nemesis, who is one of my favorites—although he won't stick around, due to the Wall.

It was a good Deadshot story. I'm a bit disappointed that he left the suit and wrist Magnums behind. I understand the necessity of it, though. Deadshot is my favorite Batman villain. He was a great adversary for the Dark Night Detective, because he uses the one weapon that destroyed Bruce Wayne's world: the gun. Sure, other Batman villains use guns, but Deadshot is a marksman, and his wrist Magnums and infrared sighting made him very menacing. Old Floyd is leaving a piece of history behind. I guess that's what it is now, history.

Thank you for a good story. I'm looking forward to the next issue. Please don't have Deadshot die, especially at the hands of Boomerbutt! Thank you.

Sincerely,
Paul Wargelin
11 Birchfield Court
Coram, NY 11727

*And thank you for writing, Paul! You are our grand prize-winner for naming the most dead ex-Squad members in #50. That's right, Paul, you and a lucky friend will be flown down to beautiful Louisiana for a luxury weekend for two in the lovishly appointed Belle Reve Federal Penitentiary. There you'll be waited on hand and foot by vicious, super-powered psychopaths who would just as soon shoot you as wear a hat.*

*What's that? You can't make it for our Last Weekend Get-Away? Well, then, I guess you'll just have to settle for our take-home game! For only $1.00 a month, you'll be able to follow the adventures of your favorite cast of lovable, super-powered psychopaths as they grige and hill their way into your heart.*

*Congratulations, Paul! Let's everyone give him a hand!*

Dear Suiciders,

The highlight of SUICIDE SQUAD #51 for me was the use of Batg—uh, Barbara G—um, Amy Beddo—er, okay, Oracle! Thanks for giving this character a second wind. It's great to see her here as well as over in HAWK & DOVE. Whether she regains the use of her legs or not, events are exciting enough to make me keep close tabs on them. I like the deal that she and Amanda have struck with each other. Amanda's need for an "understudy" makes perfect sense. Whereas I'd hate to see the Wall get killed off, there's always the chance of that happening. While Amy may not have the same force and drive that Amanda does, she does have the smarts, and this may be a good way for the Wall to carry on the Squad's purpose even from beyond the grave. I keep wondering how Amanda would react if she discovered that "Amy" was once Batgirl, a friend of Batman's, someone who Amanda is constantly butting heads with. I have to agree with Dr. LaGrieve: keeping the Thinker around is a dangerous idea. It's also a fascinating plot development! I'll be watching this one closely, too. The idea of programming a conscience for him is intriguing in itself. What would happen if the Thinker ran into Dybbuk?

In the past, I've regarded Deadshot as a "Rambo"-type of character, one I didn't care for that much. While I've always seen him as a vital player in the book (and his miniseries a couple of years back), he just wasn't one of my favorite characters. This may change, however, after reading the closing pages of this issue and the ending line, "You win, pal. The suit's yours." Now that he's conquered his obsession with the costume and the Deadshot persona, I'm interested in where Floyd will go from here. I doubt that he's completely cured of his psychosis, but turning his back on the uniform was a big step for him. He's also got to find out that he was set up by Ducard this issue, right? The scene with Floyd and Count Vertigo was also very tense and well played.

It's great to see Nightshade and Nemesis back with the Squad, and to learn that Vixen is on the mend. (When did her recent adventure with the Flash take place?) I've found that I'm crazy over Geof Isherwood's art, and look forward to what he'll do with each issue from month to month. Teamed here with Luke McDonnell, we have double the pleasure, double the fun. Geof draws a very attractive Vixen, and I really enjoyed the scenes with Poison Ivy when she was in the book.

I'm looking forward to next issue, which looks like it will wrap up yet another plot thread in yet another fun, exciting way!

Sincerely,
Neil Ahlquist
Minneapolis, MN

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Deadshot without his costume? Deadshot without his wrist Magnums? How will Floyd get along without his "other half"? Now what does this little sidestep do to the "relationship" of Floyd and Boomerbutt?

Bang,
Sir Jon Johnson
64 Indian Hill Avenue
Portland, CT 06480

*Well, M'lud, "The Dragon's Hoard" hasn't exactly given Boomerang and Lawton a lot of "downtime" to explore each other's true feelings. So we'll just have to wait until the two get the chance to have a nice, long chat about the future. Or lack thereof...*

* * * * *

Dear Suicidal Scripters,

If you think that Deadshot got violent when getting rid of his costume, you should have seen him when he got rid of his three-piece suit!

I'm glad that you decided to keep Oracle as a cast member. She was always a good heroine as Batgirl, but now she is more than just a clone of another hero. I just hope that Amanda's choosing her as her replacement doesn't bode ill for our fearless leader!

Mark Phillips
P.O. Box 1927
Johnson City, TN 37605

*No comment, Mark.*
*But don't quote me.*

* * * * *

Dear Dan, John, Kim, Luke, Geof, Todd, and Tom:

"Dying is easy," Marc Pilar told Floyd Lawton in SUICIDE SQUAD #51, and the triumph of "Fractured Image" lay in the way that John Ostrander and Kim Yale took two seemingly unreconcilable elements—a Squad member's personal quest (Deadshot after his impersonator) and a hefty dose of "Personal Files" interludes—and knitted them together. Something like this was tried in #26, but it didn't quite succeed; here, it did, because be the setting Pittsburgh or Marseilles ("Marseille" is also correct, but after nine years of French, I have to use the final "s"), the guiding thought was death. Maybe that shouldn't be a surprise, given the book's title, but how well it all worked!

For Cliff Carmichael, making someone commit suicide *should* have been easy, but Amanda Waller was too fast for him. She couldn't outfox him totally, as Simon LaGrieve pointed out, but while he was working against her, "Amy Beddoes" was working for her. And Amanda herself seemed to have some intimations of mortality: her offer to Oracle showed a side I hadn't thought was there, yet which fit with the widowed woman who'd lost two of her five children and a cousin over the years, and with the tirade Captain Boomerang gave Deadshot (more on that in a couple of paragraphs): the new Amanda wouldn't "*deliberately* try to get" anyone killed, but she accepted the possibility of people, herself included, being killed.

For Werner Vertigo, death was something he wanted open to him, while Simon kept it closed (as anyone who took an oath to Hippocrates would). The Count's scene with Floyd Lawton was disturbing, for the "clean and sober" Werner wasn't free; he had no urge to gouge out Poison Ivy's eyes; he was well and tired, and, as he told Father Craemer (where's he? With Nightshade back on hand, shouldn't her favorite padre follow?) in #31, he was "tired of being tired." Deadshot would honor the request, but the Count didn't ask for the bullet yet. It was frightening that Floyd would kill him, but oddly reassuring that he wanted Vertigo to "be damned sure that's what you *really* want before you really *ask* me to do it." After all, for a man with his own death wish, Floyd's still managing to go strong.

And, fittingly, Floyd made no threats to Digger. Oh, he raised a trigger finger and said "bang," but the thought of "gonner have to *kill* him" came not from Floyd—who lost his essence because of the Captain—but from Digger, who *thought* it rather than said it. Pulling Captain Boomerang into a mission has a history—see "Nightshade's Odyssey," for instance—but the Quraci assignment was something Digger had to go on, for even scum have to settle debts of honor. While the Batman might disagree, in his own way, Deadshot is an honorable man—or, at least, one who finds living "difficult" rather than "impossible."

Ducard and Pilar didn't grasp that. As far as they went, they *were* right—that suit *is* Floyd—but Floyd's full of surprises. I felt that as far back as #6, when he could have been killed yet withdrew, and, here, faced with surrendering a suit or giving up his life, he left the suit to a dead man and headed home. Marnie Herrs (the shrink from the DEADSHOT miniseries) would have been proud. So would Shade, the Changing Man, whose words to Major Victory on Apokolips—the power is in *you*, not in your clothes—summed up #51's Deadshot to a tee. "Better" is a relative term, but being in the Suicide Squad seems to make people better. You might wish that all improvements were as lovely as the scene between Tom Tresser and Eve Eden, but you have to take what you can get.

I'll take SUICIDE SQUAD #51 gladly, but for what it offered and for what it promised (please let Dr. LaGrieve's tests on Nightshade bring in June Moone); the Luke McDonnell/Geof Isherwood artwork was grubby and exciting, and even tender with Tom and Eve (...clearly, Luke and Geof meant it as much as Eve). Tom McCraw contributed superb downbeat coloring, and, all in all, the last word must go to Edmund Kean. Kean supposedly said on his deathbed: "Dying is easy—comedy is hard!" From the blurb on page 22 and "The mysterious Dan Raspler's" Next Issue box, it looks as if the difficult story will unfold *next* month, with that "Doctor Light-Hearted Tale."

I think you'll pull it off. In the meantime, my congratulations to all on the stunning "Fractured Image."

Very truly yours,
Charles J. Sperling
Flushing, NY

P.S. I hope Nemesis and Nightshade do work together a lot, if not here (how's the Darling of Darkness's Limited Series coming, Kim?)

*Thanks for writing, Charles. You reading this, Kim?*

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Ostrander and Miss Kim Yale:

Please, please, PLEASE disregard Marson Fedrick's last request in issue #50 to kill Vixen. She has grown into quite an interesting character with a more formidable power than I had thought. (I recently read her guest appearance in FLASH.) Besides, she is the only Black heroine DC has to offer, and even though Onyx would seem to be an asset to any team, she remains in limbo. As a Black man, I really appreciate every issue Vixen is in. She's the best—a combination of Storm and Wolverine. She should be as popular as those two. Don't get rid of my favorite DC heroine! Please!

Ricky Wright
16621 SW 102 Avenue
Miami, FL 33157

*Don't worry too much, Ricky. John and Kim never really expressed an interest in bumping off Vixen; only I did. And I'm only the editor.*

*By the way, who were those two characters you compared Vixen to? Are they in the DOOM PATROL or something? Maybe we should do a team-up.*

* * * * *

Dear Folks,

You've done a few things with Deadshot lately, but this is by far the best. Nobody helping him, nobody trying to figure out what he's trying to do or say, just him, in a fight with (to him, anyway) himself. It's not the first time that a character has come along who feels more at home in his suit than in his own skin, but this is by far the best treatment of the idea. Lawton wants to be Deadshot all the time, and now he can't be. He's not angry that somebody's using his suit, he's angry that the guy's *being him*. But he does kill him. And he lets him keep the suit. Perhaps like the way a bird won't go back to its own nest after another bird has touched it and fouled it with their scent?

So now he'll probably go without a glitzy suit. And it'll probably make him a better killer, and a crazier person. I seem to recall a Mark Twain story where he kills his own conscience, and becomes a totally amoral nut. (I believe he eats a door-to-door salesman.) Batman has already said that Deadshot pulls his shots around him; maybe Lawton won't have that weakness.

Best panel of the issue—page 4, panel 1—The Thinker gets a remote control migraine, and The Wall has a look on her face that's so telling, you can almost see the thought balloon reading "You schmuck."

Thwack,
Vinnie Bartilucci
Elmont, NY

*Thanks for writing, Vinnie. Keep in touch.*

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Suicide Notes:

Another issue of the Squad to discuss, notably #51. Did I like this issue? Oh, yeah. The reasons are the usual: great art, amazing plot lines, and characters who are so intense they scare even me. This issue concentrated on my favorite teammember, Deadshot. He was as cheerful as ever. The dialogue between Lawton and Vertigo was priceless. The Lawton and Boomerang discussion was even better. I laughed aloud when I read the "bang" panel. I read a lot of comics, and this is the only one I can remember laughing at except LOBO. On the serious side, the main story of the issue was amazing. I didn't think Deadshot ever got nervous. I am totally against the new no-costume look of the S.S., but after this issue I can understand at least one member not wearing his costume, although I must say he looks even more intense without the uniform and yes, it did hurt to admit it. I wonder the obvious: will he make a new and different costume? Will it be as exceptional as the old one? (Highly unlikely.) Still, it was nice to know Lawton isn't all costume and wrist Magnuma. Whatever the outfit and weapons, there can only be one Deadshot. I thank you sincerely for an amazing experience. I think SUICIDE SQUAD is an exceptional book. If compared to the other books on the market, it is beyond belief. I love the letters pages (even when my letter isn't in it). I remember what Ostrander wrote about the reasons for cancelling FIRESTORM. As best I can remember, it all came down to his not wanting to do bad stories. I hope he feels the same way about the S.S. I have every issue of the LEGENDS mini, the DEADSHOT mini, and all Squad guest appearances except for FIRESTORM #64 (which I will get if I have to kill for it). Well, I'll write to you next month, Dan. Don't take all the weirdness so seriously; you'll get a headache. Really.

Barry P. Burke
2201 Palmer Avenue, Apt. 1C
New Rochelle, N Y 10801

P.S. Thanks for printing my letter again. I feel like Uncle Elvis.

*Okay. But how do you look?*

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

With #51, the Suicide Squad grew up. As Deadshot—excuse me, Lawton—gave up claims on the costume, as he exorcised his ghosts, this title officially moved away from the standard super-hero ranks to the espionage/intrigue books it's been evolving toward. Last year's "Phoenix Gambit" began the evolution, climaxing with #50. I'm not sure this title can survive without the costumed heroes and villains, but it's good to see you take the risk to move beyond these conventions. The costume did not make Lawton Deadshot, his skill did. As with the new Legion of Super-Heroes, bright costumes and code names are no longer requirements. A reader needs only to be able to follow the characters. I'm enjoying the current trend at DC towards non-costumed protagonists, as it expands the avenues a writer may travel. Lawton's adventure in #51 could not have been more exciting if he put on a Deadshot costume. It is gratifying to see comics take a small, but significant, step such as this in their evolution.

On a less weighty matter, isn't it time for a new logo? How 'bout it?

Mahalo,
Mark Lucas
Los Angeles, CA

*A new logo? Hmmm.*

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**THE NEXT ISSUE BOX THAT DRIPPED BLOOD**

Gort, Vertigo, and Lawton engage in extreme violence with the Khmer Rouge. Captain Zuko and the Soviet Dead Men interrogate Boomerang and Carmichael, with the mysterious Lamia in attendance as well. And what about Bronze Tiger and Mark Shaw in the clutches of the Yakuza, or the vengeance of Katana? Plus: the new Red Shadows are interested in Nightshade...and Zastrow gets what Zastrow wants.

Which leaves us with Amanda in a Japanese hospital...and Catseye on the loose!

—Dan Raspler
Shaking in his boots!